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THE

CATHOLIC LAYMAN.

Gleoir do Dhia an rna hárduib, agur ríodáin aip an dtalam deagóil do na dáoimí.

LUKE ii. 14.

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IS THE CLOISTER A RETREAT FROM SIN?

THE other day, as we sauntered along a quiet, country road, in the pursuit of health, we were struck with an odd expression from an elderly, decent-looking woman to another, who seemed to be listening to a narrative of provocation, so exceedingly aggravated, that she said, "It was enough to make a nun or an angel commit sin!" As we passed along, and thought over the expression, we remembered that there certainly were angels who did lose their first estate, and did commit sin; but we very much doubt if the good old woman, who put the case to her listening friend, ever harboured a thought that a priest or a nun could have committed sin. The angels did not commit sin until they had fallen from their first estate; all mankind, including priests, popes, and nuns, have, in Adam, already fallen from their first estate of innocence, and have been born in sin; yet, from an extensive intercourse with our Roman Catholic brethren, in the humbler ranks of life, we know that it is a prevalent notion among them, that a priest or a nun (unless reprobated and cast away) cannot, and does not commit sin.

Now, we have not the slightest intention to impugn the lives and conduct of those whom our Roman Catholic friends are disposed to revere. Far from it. We are ready to give the utmost credit that can be claimed to the sincerity and good motives of those who desire to devote themselves to a holy and religious life, and to fly from the world and its seductions and temptations, and seek spiritual rest and peace in the retreat of their cells and cloisters. But though we concede the utmost sincerity and purity of motives and life to the devotees, we venture to question the idea that is so deeply rooted in the Roman Catholic mind, that sin can be shut out by stone walls—that Satan and his powers of darkness can be escaped or eluded by flying to the retreat of a convent or a monastery. The grosser acts of sin, the vices of fashion and frivolity, may no longer be open to the recluse, and so far there is a certain degree of immunity secured; but what avails this in the sight of a pure and holy God, who estimates sin not according to the measure of man, and reckons its magnitude not by its danger to society—who holds the impure imagination of the heart to be adultery, the vengeful thought of the mind to be murder—who denounces the proud and haughty spirit with the most fearful condemnation. If you place a man on the loftiest summit of the Alps, far away from everything of human kind, can you thereby free his mind from devouring thoughts of ambition, jealousy, impatience, or discontent? If you shut him up in the deepest abyss of the earth, can you take him beyond the reach of the wildest imaginations, and the most wicked thoughts? May not his mind be like a wilderness through which every unclean beast of the forest may roam at large? How vain and foolish then the idea of our young Roman Catholic friends, who fly from the world without, and its snares and temptations, its deceitfulness and sin, not knowing that they are abandoning themselves more entirely to a still worse and more depraved world within, to a heart that is by nature "deceitful above all things, and desperately

wicked?" We, of course, admit the potency of the dangers with which the associations of the world are fraught, and confess, that the experience of its insincerity has quenched many a generous aspiration and stunted many a noble impulse of youth, and that its evil example has led many into vice and degradation, yet, with all its temptations, it seems to us that he who mingles in the daily throng has far ampler scope for the exercise of the humanizing and ennobling charities of life, and is quite as likely to be usefully employed, whether as regards himself or others, as the pale recluse who, absorbed in complacent reveries on his self-dedication, says mentally to all beside, "Stand off, for I am holier than thou."

Again we say, we do not impeach the sincerity or purity of the lives of those who devote themselves to a monastic or conventional life; but we boldly assert, that it is one of the greatest delusions that ever possessed the mind of a young person to suppose, that a life of seclusion, or of the most rigorous observance of discipline or formularies, can so preoccupy the mind as to debar all entrance to sin—or that the great enemy of souls cannot as effectually practice his wiles and temptations upon the frail child of Adam in the solitude of a cell as in the giddiest maze of fashion or folly. Depend upon it, we are safest when in the way of God's own ordinance, when we are in the path of duty, fulfilling in humble dependance upon divine strength, the allotted duties of our station and calling; and we may rest assured, that as the devil is not less active or powerful in the most solitary retirement of the cloister, so neither is the protecting arm of God less strong in the busiest scenes of life.

We have something further to say on this subject in another column.

BREVIARIUM ROMANUM—NO. II.

In our last December number we gave several specimens of the instructive "lessons" which every Roman Catholic priest is bound to read daily, under pain of mortal sin, in the Breviary or Clerical Prayer Book of his Church; and, notwithstanding the immense circulation of our paper through every part of the kingdom, we have not received a single complaint that we misrepresented or mistranslated a single passage, nor a single protest against the question we asked our readers—viz., whether they believed that any intelligent or educated priest, in the nineteenth century, can sincerely give credit to such old wives' fables?

We shall proceed with our extracts, as before, without much regard to classification or order, but giving, as usual, the original Latin, with the exact reference to the volume and page where each story is to be found. The first which occurs to us is the story of Paul the Hermit, whose feast is held on the 15th of January, and which will be found in the Breviarium Romanum, published by R. Coyne, printer and bookseller to the Royal College of Maynooth. —(Pars Hiemalis, p. 450-1, 4th, 5th, and 6th lessons.)

Paul the Hermit, we are there told, retired to a cave in the desert parts of the Thebais, on account of the persecution of Decius and Valerius, where he lived to the age of 113. Being near his death, Anthony, another Egyptian anchorite, paid him a visit by a supernatural command from heaven. They at once saluted one another by their proper names, though previously strangers to each other, and began to talk about spiritual matters, when a raven, who had been in the habit of bringing Paul half a loaf of bread daily, brought a whole loaf for him and his visitor! After the raven had departed, "Ah," said Paul, "the Lord has sent us our dinner. It is now sixty years since I have received daily half a loaf; to-day my allowance has been doubled." They then proceeded to eat their dinner at the fountain, and spent the night in divine praises. In the morning, Paul admonishing Anthony about his death which was then approaching, exhorted him to bring him a cloak which he had got from St. Athanasius, and which he wished to have as his winding-sheet. Anthony was coming back with the cloak, when he saw the soul of Paul ascending into heaven, surrounded by the holy company of the prophets, and apostles, and choirs of angels. In the cave he found the corpse of Paul, with crossed knees, erected head, and hands stretched out on high, which he wrapped in the cloak as desired. He was, however, at a loss how to dig a grave, being himself

an old man of ninety, and having no spade or other instrument to do it with. When, lo! two lions ran swiftly from the interior of the desert to the body of the blessed old man, and gave Anthony to understand, very intelligibly, as well, at least, as they could, that they greatly deplored Paul, and then set to work with their claws, and, striving to outdo one another, eagerly dug a hole in the earth, big enough conveniently to contain the body, and then departed! When they were gone, Anthony buried the body in the grave prepared by these singular grave-diggers, and formed a tomb over it after the manner of Christians. He then took possession of Paul's coat, which was made of palm-leaves, in the manner of basket-work, and wore it regularly as long as he lived as a holiday-dress on Easter and Whitsunday.*

We may here briefly refer a few other specimens of lions, recorded in the same book; and, we doubt not, there are others, if we had time to search further. †

St. Venantius (18 May. Pars Verna, p. 544) was ordered to be cast to the lions, but they, forgetting their natural ferocity, cast themselves at his feet!†

St. Prisca also, after suffering many other cruelties, was brought into the amphitheatre, and cast to a lion; but he, forgetting his savage nature, humbly cast himself at her feet!‡—(Pars Hiemalis, p. 461.) This and other miracles were, however, sad to say, wrought in vain; for poor Prisca's persecutors, after unsuccessfully trying to starve, burn, and tear her to pieces with iron nails, at last succeeded by bethinking themselves of the more summary process of cutting off her head!

A still more striking instance, however, is to be found (under date, 10th June, Pars Æstiva, p. 361), where SS. Primus and Felicianus having been cast into the theatre, and two lions let loose on them, the noble animals, not only prostrated themselves at their knees, but fawned upon them with their heads and tails. The poor saints, however, were, as usual, despatched with the axe.§

A very similar story is told (same vol., p. 375, 15th June) of SS. Vitus, Modestus, and Crescentia, who were also cast to a lion, who prostrated himself, and licked their feet.||

In the same volume (30th July. Pars Æstiva, p. 496) we have a slight variation in the spectacle, in the case of SS. Abdon and Sennen, who having been cast to the bears and lions, for spitting on the images, in the time of the Emperor Decius, the wild beasts were afraid to touch them, whereupon the never-failing sword was successfully resorted to, in spite of the miracle.¶

When on the subject of wild beasts, we ought, however, not to omit mentioning the case of the celebrated St. Januarius and his companions (19 Sept. Pars Autunalis, p. 343), who, after having escaped, unhurt, from a burning furnace, and various other trials, were also thrown to the wild beasts in the amphitheatre, who (as before), forgetful of their natural ferocity, prostrated themselves at the feet of Januarius,** which, however, did them but little good, for the prodigy having been attributed to magical incantation, they, like St. Prisca and the rest, were despatched with the sword.

* Cumque ad ejus cellam pervenisset, inventis genibus complicitis, erecta cervice, extensisque in altum manibus corpus examine; quod pallio obvolutus, hymnosque et psalmos ex Christiana traditione decantans, cum sarcinula, quo terram foderet, non habebat. *duos leones ex interiore erème rapido cursu ad beatum corpus feruntur; ut facile interficeretur eos, quo modo potenter, ploratum edere; qui certaque terram pedibus effundentes, foveant, que hominem commode capere, efficerunt. Qui cum abilissent, Antonius sanctum corpus in eum locum intulit; et injecta humo, tumulum ex Christiano more composuit. Tunicam vero Pauli, quam in spate modice ex palme foliis sibi sibi contextaverat, secum auferens, eo vestiti diebus solennibus Paschæ et Pentecostes, quoad vixit, usus est. We give the Latin, of course, only in the passages where otherwise we might be suspected of exaggeration or distorting the original.*

† *Quod cum præsumptu nuntiatus esset, extemplo Venantum leonibus objici jussit; qui, naturali feritate omissa, ad ejus se pedes abjecerunt.*

‡ *Post triduum in amphitheatrum producta, leoni objicitur; qui, sua feritatis oblitus, humiliter se ad ejus pedes abiecit.*

§ *Mox utrumque perdiu imperat in theatrum, in eoque immixtus duos leones, qui prostrati ad eorum genua, capite et canda ipsi blandientur.*

|| *Leoni objiciuntur, qui prostremens se eorum pedes lambebat.*

** *Qui cum in urbe ad simulacula attracti essent, ea detestatae conspuerunt. Quamobrem ursus ac leonibus objecti sunt, quos ferens arietibus attingeret.*

¶ *In ardente fornacem conjectus ita illusus evasit, ut ne ventum aut capillum quidem flamma violaverit. Postero die omnes in amphitheatro feris objecti sunt, quae naturalis oblitus feritatis, ad Januarii pedis se praestare.*

The story then goes on to tell the exploded fable of St. Januarius' blood, which, kept in a glass phial, in a coagulated state, liquifies and bubbles up, just as if it were recently shed, as often as it is placed in sight of the martyr's head!*

This favourite standing miracle is annually enacted at Naples, before thousands of admiring spectators; but it has been well asked—would it not be more charitable to allow one of our chemists to view the blood, and observe its change, not surrounded by priests, candles, and the smoke of frankincense, and thus convert us all at one stroke?

The Rev. Blanco White, once Chaplain to the King of Spain, and Rector of the College of St. Mary at Seville, tells us, in his "Practical Evidence against Catholicism," p. 171, that he had often performed High Mass, before the shrine of St. Ferdinand, in the Royal Chapel at Seville; but though a member of the Chapter to whose charge the Spanish kings have entrusted their holy ancestor, he never could obtain a distinct view of the body, which the Church of Rome declares to be incorrupt.†

"On certain days," says he, "the front of a massive silver sarcophagus is removed, when a gold and glass chest is seen, containing something like a man covered with splendid robes; but the multitude of candles on the altar, and the want of light from behind, prevent a distinct view of the objects within. Once, when the multitude was thronging the chapel, a lady of high rank, who had applied to me for a closer view than was allowed to the crowd, was furnished with a stool to stand upon a level with the body. To gratify, at once, her and my own curiosity, I took a candle from the altar, and endeavoured to counteract the reflection of the glass, by throwing the light obliquely. One of our inferior clergy, the sacristan, whose duty it was to stand near the saint in his surplice, seeing what I was about, snatched the candle from my hand, with a rudeness which nothing but his half-roguish, half-holy zeal could have prompted. He pretended to be alarmed for the pane of glass; but I more than suspect that he knew the incorruption of the saint could not bear inspection. The head, which I distinctly saw, was a mere skull, with something like painted parchment holding up the lower jaw. A similar covering seems to have been laid on the right foot, which projects out of the royal robes. When the greatest miracle of Christianity, the resurrection of Christ, was performed for the conversion of men to the Gospel, the Saviour himself offered the marks of his wounds to the close inspection of a doubting disciple. The Church of Rome follows a different plan in the use of the multiplied miracles of which she boasts. She has no compassion for men who will credit only their sight and touch."

But to return to our extracts from the Breviary—When alluding to Paul the Hermit's raven, we ought not to forget *St. Egidius's* wild doe, who, when he had retired into the wilderness, used to come to him every day, at stated hours, to give him milk, on which he lived for a long time with the roots of herbs! (2 Sept. Pars Autumnalis, p. 281), though we, perhaps, might account for a deer becoming tame and coming to be milked rather more easily, than we could explain how a raven could bake bread, and know when a whole loaf was necessary, and when half a loaf would do!

St. Raymond Nonnatus (31 Aug. Pars Autumnalis, p. 280) was also indebted to the kind offices of a blind mule, which, when after his death a contention arose about where he should be buried, decided the matter by spontaneously carrying the body, shut up in its coffin, to the Chapel of St. Nicholas, that he might be buried in that place where he had first learned the rudiments of a more holy life.‡

A few pages farther on in same volume (Pars Autum., p. 286) we have another specimen of posthumous honours in the case of *St. Lawrence Justin*, who used, among other modes of mortifying his body, to sleep on bare tiles, and even when sick and dying ordered his domestics to place him on his usual bed, in reward for which, his body, after it had been more than two months buried, was found whole and uncorrupt, *frogrant with a sweet odour, and with a ruddy countenance!* On which account, with other novel miracles wrought by him after his death, Pope Alexander VIII. added him to the number of the saints.||

St. Lawrence's bed of tiles is, however, far outdone by that of *St. Rose of Lima*, whose life we reviewed in our third vol., p. 104, but who figures also in the Breviary (30 Aug. Pars Autum., p. 277). Her bed was made of knotted trunks of trees, of which she filled up the inter-

stices with broken tiles.* According to her life, in Mr. Duffy's volume, it was a still more dreadful instrument of torture. "She made herself a bed, in the form of a chest, and filled it with rough stones of different sizes. This bed, still seeming too soft, she added three pieces of twisted and knotted wood, and filled up the space with three hundred pieces of broken tiles, placed so as to wound and tear the body. Upon this terrible cross she never placed herself without trembling and shuddering, while her blood seemed to freeze in her veins." For the other almost, if not altogether, incredible austerities of St. Rose, we must refer our readers to Mr. Duffy's volume, in what he calls "The Young Christian's Library," or to the CATHOLIC LAYMAN already referred to, vol. iii., p. 105, adding this single sad reflection, which we believe to be actually the truth. Roman Catholic nunneries rob society of many of the most amiable and virtuous female minds—those who, in the practice of social duties, if brought up in the more genial atmosphere of home, would be a blessing to their relations and friends, and patterns of virtue to the community—to make their lives, at best, a perpetual succession of torture and useless, if not of actually suicidal, practices. The quiet and soberminded are made the slaves of outward ceremonies; the ardent and sensitive are doomed, like St. Rose, to fanaticism and madness. Is not such the natural result of the Church holding up such models for daily imitation? The power of persecuting others on a grand scale is given to very few, but every individual might be made his own tormentor, if he would only adopt the practices which the Church of Rome represents as the means of arriving at Christian perfection.

We must postpone further extracts from the Breviary till another number.

HISTORY OF THE POPES.—NO. IV.

THE TENTH CENTURY CONCLUDED.

WE now proceed to complete the history of the Popes of the tenth century, from the Jesuits, Labbe and Cossart.

POPE LEO VIII.

This Pope, of whom we have found mention in the life of Pope John XII., given in our last number, is not reckoned in the list of Popes, either by Labbe and Cossart or by Bishop Milner. But here we meet with a curious fact—the Leo who was Pope in 936 is called in both lists Leo VII., and the Leo who was Pope in 1049 is called Leo IX.; and neither list has any Leo VIII. at all! The reason is, because this Leo VIII. was counted in the list by all the older writers; and all the historians called the next Pope of that name Leo IX. It was impossible in later times to alter the title of this Leo IX. without confounding all history; so all that could be done to get over the difficulty of having two Popes at one and the same time, was to have no Leo VIII. at all! But Leo VIII. will turn up again for all that, for such a Pope there was, and a stirring fellow, too.

POPE BENEDICT V.

The Jesuits say—"Benedict, from being a deacon of the Church of Rome, was elected by the unanimous consent of the clergy and people of Rome, in place of the deceased Pope John XII., in the year of our Lord 964, in the time of the emperors, Otho and Nicephorus. Which thing being done, since the Roman chiefs had done it contrary to their faith given and confirmed by an oath, "the Emperor Otho," says Luitprand, "went to Rome with a multitude of his faithful followers, collected from all sides, and surrounded it on all sides with a strict siege, lest any way out should lie open. But the citizens, greatly animated by the exhortation of Pope Benedict, for a long time sustained the siege, until stricken with hunger, they were compelled to surrender the city. After the city was taken, Benedict being banished to Hamburg, the false Pope Leo, the eighth of that name, was raised to the See, a false synod was called, and empty constitutions were made."†

The Jesuits proceed—"Benedict died in exile in the year of our Lord 965, adorned with the title and honour of martyrdom, equally with Popes Pontianus and Martinus, who, on account of their glorious confession of Christ, for his name's sake suffered banishment and other injuries and insults."‡ We, however, greatly doubt whether Benedict V. had any valid claim to the honour of a martyr; for we have in Labbe and Cossart the proceedings of the above-mentioned synod held by Leo VIII., and it appears there that Benedict V., when brought before that synod, begged hard for mercy, and "shouted out that he himself was the invader of the holy Roman See!" And he handed up his Pall and Papal staff to Leo VIII. as true Pope!§ And by thus ac-

* *Præclarum illud quoque quod ejus Sanguis, qui in ampulla virice concreta asservatur, cum in conspectu capitis ejusdem martyris ponitur, admirandum in modum colliquescerit et ebullire, perinde atque recens effusus, ad hæc usque tempora cernitur.*

† *Jacet ejus corpus incorruptum adhuc post quatuor saecula in templo maximo Hispanensi, honorissimum inclusum sepulchro.*—Breviarium Romanum in festo Sancti Ferdinandi.

‡ *Egidius Athenensis secessit in erenum, ubi diutius herbarum radicibus, et cervæ lacte, quæ statim ad eum horis veniebat, admirabiliter sanctificata vixit.*

§ *Mortui corpus, cum circa locum sepulturae contentio orta esset, et muli causa impositum, ad sacellum Sancti Nicolai Dei nati delatum fuit, ut ibi tumularetur, ubi prima jecera sanctioris vita fundamenta.*

¶ *Sacrum cadaver per duos ultra menses inhumatum, suavi fragrans odore et rubescente facie, integrum, atque incorruptum, ac nova post mortem patrata miracula, quibus permotus Alexander octavus Pontifex maximus eum sanctorum numero adscripsit.*

knowledging himself a false Pope, he obtained banishment instead of the death which he feared. Great allowance, no doubt, is to be made for such weakness in an unsuccessful aspirant to the Papacy in that age. But the Jesuits have a strange idea of the spirit of a martyr, when they put forward this man as an instance of the spirit of martyrdom in Roman Popes! When St. Paul was persecuted for being an Apostle he did not beg for mercy, and "shout out" that he was a false Apostle, in order to obtain it! So the attempt to show one martyr-Pope in the tenth century is a sad failure.

The Jesuits thus conclude his history—"Some writers omit him altogether, as being unjustly intruded; others place him before Leo, the schismatic and false Pope; but they are deceived in maintaining either of these opinions. For, from those things which I have said above, it manifestly appears that Leo was never anything else but a false Pope, and an antipope, unworthy to be counted in their number, decorated with the name of Pope."†

But it is truly wonderful how impossible it appears to be for Roman Catholics to agree even about those things which they say themselves are manifest and evident. For if we turn to the Canon Law, the Decretum of Gratian, dist. 63, c. 23, there we find the decrees of Pope Leo VIII. in his synod, inserted as the law of the Church of Rome!

POPE JOHN XIII.

"John, Bishop of Narnia, after the death of the false Pope Leo (whether Benedict V. was alive or dead is uncertain), was made Pope in the year of our Lord 965, in the time of the Emperors Otho and Nicephorus Phocas."‡ Now, it seems to us rather important to know whether Benedict V. was then alive or dead; for if he were a lawful Pope, and living at the time when John XIII. was appointed, it is hard to see how Roman Catholics can consider John XIII. a lawful Pope. But on that we can get no satisfaction, so we go on—"Who, in the beginning of his Pontificate, attacked the chief men of the Romans perhaps more sharply than he should have done; by their advice, being seized by the prefect of the city, he was banished to Campania." In this banishment he seems to have acted with more spirit certainly than his predecessor, Benedict V.; but it was not exactly the spirit of a martyr either; for, having got the emperor on his side, he got him to punish the prefect thus—"He took care that the prefect of the city, while living, should be stripped naked, placed on an ass, and being crowned with a bladder, be led about in derision, beaten with rods, and, at length, cast into prison; he commanded that the corpse of the dead prefect, by whom Pope John had been ejected from the city, dragged from its sepulchre, should be rent asunder, and scattered in diverse places."§ A very complete revenge, certainly; and another illustration of the name of John—"The mercy of God"—as borne by the Popes. But if the present Emperor Napoleon had ordered the same thing to be done to all by whom the present Pope, Pius IX., was driven from Rome in 1848, what a procession there would have been!

The rest of the history of Pope John XIII. consists of a list of those nations who were converted about that time; and it was well if the Popes of that age did not make their converts as much the children of hell as themselves. It is also recorded at the end of this Pope's life, that "he expelled a devil, by the chain of St. Peter, placed round the neck of the possessed."§ But we think if any man could have expelled the devil out of the hearts of so many of the Popes of that age, that man would have been a greater miracle-worker than any Pope that ever lived. What a pity the Popes did not begin at home!

POPE DONUS II.

"Donus, who by others is called Dominus, and Domininus, a Roman by nation, was made Pope (the second of this name) in the year 972; who died when he had sat only three months."|| We can hardly expect a longer account of one who only held the Papacy three months; but it does look very suspicious that so many Popes died so soon after their appointment, in that age. It looks as if others were very anxious to succeed them.

POPE BENEDICT VI.

This Pope, as far as we can judge from his life, seems to have been more sinned against than sinning; and some light is thrown, too, on the short lives of Popes. "Benedict being taken and thrust into prison by Boniface Franco, a Roman, the son of Fernitius, a CARDINAL DEACON, a most wicked man, was strangled in the same

* *Hunc Scriptorum ali velut iniuste intrusum omninet; ali Leonis schismatico et antipapa eudem anteponunt; sed utramlibet harum sententiam tuentes falluntur. Nam ex iis quæ supra dixi, manifeste contra Leonem nunquam nisi pseudopontificem et antipapam fuisse, indignum qui nomine pontificis condecoratus in numerum corudem referatur.*—Labbe and Cossart, vol. ix., 658.

† *Ioannes Narniensis episcopus, post obitum Leonis pontificis pseudopapa (vivente an defuncto Benedicto quanto incertum) factus est Pontificis, A.D. 965, temporibus Ottonis et Nicephori Phocæ imperatorum.*—Labbe and Cossart, vol. ix., 662.

‡ *Prefectus urbis viventem curavit denudari, impositumque asino et mite redimunt, ad ludibrium circumducit, virgines cadi, ac dominum carceribus mancipari; cadaver defuncti prefecti, a quo Joannes papa urbe ejectus erat, e sepulcro extractum in diversa loca distrahiti ac dissipari præcepit.*—Labbe and Cossart, vol. ix., 662.

§ *Per catenam sancti Petri arreptiti collo circundata, dæmonem expulsi.*—Labbe and Cossart, vol. ix., 663.

|| *Labbe and Cossart, vol. ix., 710.*